



## **SB 165 – SUPPORT**

### **JUVENILE COURT – JURISDICTION**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

*Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:*

Takoma Park Mobilization is a grassroots organization with 2,300 members that advocates at every level of government, to ensure equal treatment and justice for all. We are in SUPPORT of SB 165.

The passage of SB 165 will end the practice of automatically charging youth as adults for 33 specific offenses. In our state, prosecutors not only can but are required to prosecute children over the age of 13 in adult court for those offenses. Maryland charges up to 1,000 children per year in adult court. We are one of only 9 other states that send more than 200 children to adult court each year. We are outliers in injustice.

Ending this practice is a justice issue for *all* children, *and* it is a racial justice issue. 81% of children charged in adult court in Maryland are Black, and they are more likely to be sent to adult prison and receive longer sentences than white children. Studies indicate that charging disparities are not an indication of increased offending by Black children, but rather indicative of racially disparate policing and treatment in courts.

In addition to the above, many young people are falsely convicted. Exonerated youth defendants are 3.5 times more likely to have falsely confessed than adults according to the National Exoneration Registry. This means that innocent youth are going to prison for serious crimes at alarming rates, and those rates are even higher for Black youth.

Charging youth as adults contributes significantly to the tragedy of mass incarceration of our youth. Maryland has the shameful distinction of sending more young people to adult court based on offense type, per capita, than any other state except for Alabama. Over the past few decades, this Senate committee has looked the other way on this humanitarian catastrophe, that has been in its power to stem. We urge you to use your position to end this in 2022, to align your actions with your words, and to do right by Maryland's children.

**We urge a favorable report on SB 165**

*Submitted for Takoma Park Mobilization by Katie Stauss  
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